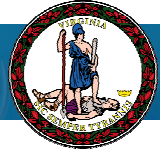




# INTEROPERABILITY IN VIRGINIA



Volume 3 Issue 1

Office of Commonwealth Preparedness

Spring 2007

## CICO Corner

By Chris Essid



I am very excited to share with you that the Commonwealth is making a smooth transition from coded language to the common language protocol released in October 2006. Many agencies across the state have made the move to common language with very little difficulty and have shared their experiences with my office. I appreciate receiving this feedback from you all as it helps us continue to improve interoperable communications statewide. If you have not yet made the transition to common language and need help, please contact my office so we may assist you in making the transition. You may contact us by email at [cico@governor.virginia.gov](mailto:cico@governor.virginia.gov) or by phone at 804-692-0137.

The CICO is also working with Lynchburg-based CTA Communications to develop and conduct a statewide communications baseline survey. The survey, which will be released by the end of March, will be sent to all public safety stakeholders and emergency support functions to establish a statewide baseline of communications and interoperability locally, regionally and statewide. The baseline will be instrumental in helping the Commonwealth determine a funding strategy for interoperable communications and helping localities plan for improved communications capabilities. Your participation is essential if the baseline study is to be a success. Please visit our communications baseline web page at <http://www.interoperability.virginia.gov/index.html> for more information in the weeks to come.

Chris Essid  
Commonwealth Interoperability Coordinator

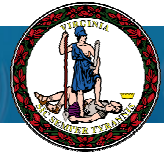
### Inside This Issue

CICO Corner.....	p.1	Local Spotlight.....	p.5
Practitioner Spotlight.....	p.2	Events Calendar.....	p.6
Pushing Progress: PMO Update.....	p.3	Recent Events.....	p.6
Common Language in the Commonwealth.....	p.4	Announcements.....	p.6

**Governor's Office of Commonwealth Preparedness  
Commonwealth Interoperability Coordinator's Office  
Old City Hall Building  
1001 East Broad Street  
Suite 140  
P.O. Box 1475  
Richmond, Virginia 23218  
Phone: (804) 692-0137**



# INTEROPERABILITY IN VIRGINIA



## Practitioner Spotlight: Lieutenant Colonel H.C. Davis



Lieutenant Colonel Herman C. (H.C.) Davis serves as the Director of the Virginia State Police Bureau of Administrative and Support Services. In his current job, he has responsibility for all of the divisions that support the Department's 1800+ sworn personnel. These divisions, which employ most of the Department's 650 civilian employees, include: Communications, Criminal Justice Information Services, Information Technology and Planning, Personnel, Property and Finance,

Training, and the Statewide Agencies Radio System Project. Prior to that, he held a variety of positions during his 30-year tenure with the State Police, ranging from uniform to criminal investigative assignments, both from an operational and administrative standpoint.

Each Newsletter will feature a Public Safety Practitioner that has had an impact on Virginia Interoperability. For this newsletter we interviewed Lieutenant Colonel H.C. Davis, member of the FY 2007 State Interoperability Executive Committee who has played a significant role in the development and implementation of the common language protocol. This is what he had to say:

### ***In your opinion, what is the biggest interoperability challenge in Virginia?***

The largest challenge that I see at present is the multitude of disparate equipment and systems throughout the Commonwealth. Many agencies are fortunate enough to have been able to procure equipment through grants or other means, but the problem begins to surface when it is discovered that these systems cannot interact with each other without some type of bridging device. Those devices are available and can bridge disparate systems, but since they require some sort of leased line to connect, there is a connectivity charge involved. These lines are not cheap. Unfortunately, the further the agency is from the hub of service, the more expensive the monthly fees. In the Richmond area alone, we have some outlying jurisdictions that are being forced to pay as much as \$1,500 per month – these are the same jurisdictions that historically have not been in a position to be able to afford such costs.

### ***What prepared you for your position as Lieutenant Colonel of the Virginia State Police?***

I have over 30 years of law enforcement experience, all of it with the Virginia State Police. My current position is the

Director of our Bureau of Administrative and Support Services. This bureau typically supports the other two bureaus of the Department (Field Operations and Criminal Investigations). Having worked in both uniform field operations and criminal investigations, both as a trooper and special agent and as a member of the command staff in each, has given me much insight on their needs. My education has also played an important role. Realizing about 15 years ago that I wanted to pursue a path in administration with the Department gave me the motivation to complete my Masters degree in Public Administration at Old Dominion University, which helped prepare me for that role. I believe both operational experience and formal training has prepared me much better than only one or the other would have alone.

### ***What is the biggest lesson you have learned from your job?***

Never forget where you came from – never forget the challenges that you faced and obstacles that stood in your way. Now that I am finally in a position to make certain changes that could alleviate some of those problems, it would be an injustice to forget about them.

### ***If you weren't doing what you are doing, what would you want to do?***

With two pre-teen boys, my free time is spent mostly with Boy Scout duties. I also have a passion for restoring old vehicles. My current project is a vintage 1971 Chevrolet pickup truck. So if I weren't doing what I am now, I would either be hiking the Appalachian Trail with the Boy Scout group or scraping my knuckles under the hood of my project truck.

### ***Virginia State police rolled out the Common Language Protocol on October 1, 2006. In your opinion, how did the rollout go? Do you have any updates to report? Have you heard any feedback from other agencies on the effort?***

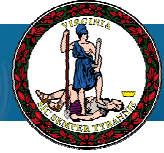
The rollout went very well. Because it was timed after inservice schools for supervisors and dispatchers, we had the opportunity to give advanced notice of the change several weeks before it occurred. Although we could not get the information to troopers during their inservice (since that happened in the summer of 2006), we did get it out on our department-wide Informational Bulletin. That notice, plus the supervisor and dispatcher buy-in as well, made for a smoother transition.

We formerly had a large sheet that listed all of our 10-codes and their meanings. This month, we prepared a new sheet that lists the old 10-codes, and the suggested new language for each. After approximately 6 months to one year, we plan to issue a new sheet with just the suggested language and no codes.

I personally have had many inquiries from different law enforcement, as well as other public safety agencies, asking for our overall procedures we used to roll out the common language protocol. Some agencies had plans for implementation and asked for some "lessons learned" information beforehand. National Public Radio in Boston and Los Angeles, as well as the BBC conducted interviews for broadcast on our implementation.



# INTEROPERABILITY IN VIRGINIA



## Pushing Progress: PMO Update

### Interoperability Baseline Study

For the Commonwealth to move towards the 2015 Vision of the Strategic Plan for Statewide Communications Interoperability which calls for improved communications for all Virginia's stakeholders, a clear, cohesive, and comprehensive technical and funding plan must be developed and implemented. To that end, the CICO is currently in the process of performing a capabilities assessment, also known as the baseline study, to obtain a clear picture of current public safety capabilities, and communications equipment and infrastructure.

Practitioner participation in the baseline survey is extremely important. The data collected in the survey will be provided to localities and regions to assist in planning for improved operability and interoperability and the state will use the data to identify gaps and challenges for funding considerations. The baseline survey will be disseminated to all local first responder organizations, state agencies, and emergency support functions shortly. Please visit [www.interoperability.virginia.gov/index.html](http://www.interoperability.virginia.gov/index.html) for up to date information and instructions regarding the baseline survey.

### Statewide Radio Caches

Radio caches provide voice communications to first responders and emergency support functions (such as transportation, the Virginia National Guard, and hospitals) to create a unified response to localized major emergencies. While limited radio caches currently exist in the Commonwealth they are often a local resource and are either too small to be effectively deployed statewide or are limited by UASI borders, such as the 500 radio cache in the National Capital Region.

To establish statewide-deployable radio cache resources, an Initiative Action Team (IAT) was established to work on Initiative 7 of the FY '07 Strategic Plan for Statewide Interoperable Communications: "*Research opportunities and facilitate policy development for strategic radio caches.*" The IAT developed statewide policies and procedures for 5 types of radio cache resources. These policies and procedures offer guidance for statewide-deployable resources but allow the locality to determine local and regional deployment protocols for activation, deactivation and local or regional deployment.

The typing system used by the IAT is modeled after NIMS and demonstrates the level of capability (Type I offers the highest level of capability while Type V offers the lowest). The types identified by the IAT require differing levels of statewide-deployment capabilities, frequencies, and compatibility requirements. See figure below for a sampling of the Type requirements.

The Commonwealth received \$5 million in FY 2006 Homeland Security Grant Program funding to fund strategically-placed radio caches in Types I-III. A local grant application for this funding will be released in mid-March for interested localities. The typing guidance, policies, and procedures for radio caches will be included with this application.

	Type I	Type II	Type III	Type IV	Type V
Number of Radios	501+ radios	301-500 radios	101-300 radios	101-200 radios	25-100 radios
Additional Equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>At least one audio interconnect (portable gateway)</li><li>Repeaters</li><li>Power (generator)</li><li>Trailer or dedicated vehicle</li><li>Tower with a trailer (elevated antennae system)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>At least one audio interconnect (portable gateway)</li><li>Repeaters</li><li>Power (generator)</li><li>Trailer or dedicated vehicle</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>At least one audio interconnect (portable gateway)</li><li>Trailer or dedicated vehicle</li></ul>		
Deployment ratio	100% deployable within region; 100% deployable outside of region (with spectrum/frequency considerations)	100% deployable within region; 100% deployable outside of region (with spectrum/frequency considerations)	100% deployable within region; 50% deployable outside of region (with spectrum/frequency considerations)	100% deployable within region; 25% deployable outside of region (with spectrum/frequency considerations)	100% deployable within region; 0% deployable outside of region

Please visit: [www.interoperability.virginia.gov](http://www.interoperability.virginia.gov) to get up to date information regarding the grants. Additionally, you may contact your Chief Administrative Officer's Office to gain more information regarding grant opportunities.

### DHS Grant Application—FY 2007

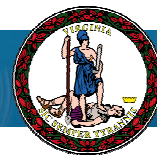
Every year, States and Territories compete against one another for a limited amount of Federal funding for homeland security programs. In late January, the Commonwealth organized its annual two-day stakeholders' retreat to offer an opportunity for stakeholders to drive the 2007 Homeland Security Grant Program submission for the state. Communications Interoperability was once again chosen as a priority area for the Commonwealth. The State Interoperability Executive Committee and other experts from across the Commonwealth represented the interests of stakeholders and identified the technology, training, and planning projects that are necessary to move Virginia towards the 2015 Vision.

The Commonwealth will submit the final application to the Department of Homeland Security in early April 2007. Funds are scheduled to be awarded in August 2007.





# INTEROPERABILITY IN VIRGINIA



## Common Language in the Commonwealth

### Background

Back in the 1920's and 1930's the law enforcement community started using 10-codes to avoid tying up radio by relaying information succinctly. Since then, 10-codes have increased greatly, with each law enforcement agency creating its own proprietary language. The result is identical codes with different meanings for different law enforcement agencies. In addition to law enforcement, coded systems have been employed by other public safety agencies and emergency support functions in the form of Signals, Codes, and other language. These coded systems impede interoperable communications because when on the radio together, law enforcement, fire, EMS, and others are all essentially speaking a different language.

In response to concerns about disparate coded language, the National Incident Management System (NIMS) requirements were developed and distributed by the Federal government. In November 2005, Governor Mark R. Warner clearly communicated the direction of the Commonwealth on the issue by signing Executive Order 102, which adopted NIMS and the National Preparedness Goal for preventing, responding to and recovering from crisis events in the Commonwealth. The Executive Order mandated localities and state agencies follow NIMS, Department of Homeland Security (DHS) requirements, and the National Response Plan (NRP) in accordance with the National Preparedness Goal for all preparedness activities in the Commonwealth. This includes, but is not limited to, deterrence, prevention, response and recovery, and mitigation efforts.

In February 2006, the NIMS Integration Center sent out a bulletin requiring that plain English be used for multi-agency, multi-jurisdiction and multi-discipline events, such as major disasters and exercises. Beginning October 1, 2006, federal preparedness grant funding became contingent on the use of common terminology in incidents requiring assistance from responders from other agencies, jurisdictions and functional disciplines.

### The Commonwealth Develops a Common Language Protocol

A major focus of the FY 2006 Commonwealth of Virginia Strategic Plan for Statewide Communications Interoperability was the establishment of a common language protocol for use statewide. Mandated by the NIMS for mutual aid situations, Virginia established a practitioner-based Initiative Action Team (IAT) to focus solely on the issue of common language.

The group determined that if common language is to be successful, Virginia's practitioners must use common language on a day-to-day basis as well as mutual aid situations. In stressful situations, first responders tend to go back to their training – using disparate coded language. To solve this problem, IAT members participated in several discussions to determine how the Commonwealth may move towards the use of plain English for day-to-day operations and major emergency situations.

The final protocol that was determined through this practitioner-driven process was formally announced through a Governor's press release on October 2, 2006 and rolled out to practitioners on October 3, 2006 at the third annual Virginia Interoperable Communications Conference in Portsmouth.

Virginia's common language protocol recommends the use of plain English for all transmissions with the exception of four scenarios that require coded language to protect responder safety. Standard coded language for the four scenarios was developed by the IAT and shall be used and understood by all public safety personnel. Determining standard and coherent ways to communicate other situations and scenarios that are currently coded and should now be moved to plain English will be at the discretion of each agency.

The common language protocol marks a major win for the Commonwealth towards improved interoperability. To extend the reach of Virginia's process and protocol, Virginia worked with the NIMS Integration Center to approve the protocol for usage statewide. The Center approved the use of the protocol within the state, however, during multi-state incidents, Virginia responders are required to use plain English for all communications (included the four scenarios). To overcome this issue of usage of the protocol across state lines and prevent other states from developing differing protocols, Virginia is working with the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) SAFECOM Program to develop a common language best practice that may be used nationwide.

### Case Study—Common Language Migration: Clark County Sheriff's Office, Berryville Police Department, Clark County Communications



The Clarke County Sheriff's Office is a 20 person full service Sheriff's Office covering 174 square miles with an approximate population of 14,000 citizens.

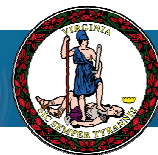
The Berryville Police Department is a 9 person department covering 2 square miles with an approximate population of 5,000 citizens. The Clarke County Communications Office dispatches for the Sheriff's Office, the Police Department, and the local volunteer/paid fire departments and rescue squads.

In Spring 2005, these agencies decided to move from coded language to plain English to improve interoperable communications in the area and beyond. Migration began soon after the decision was made by developing a list of standardized plain English phrases to replace the 10-code system.

One major challenge that was faced during this migration was the "learning curve" for dispatchers and officers, especially during high volume, stressful situations. The transition phased out approximately 20 codes that were in regular use.



# INTEROPERABILITY IN VIRGINIA



## Local Spotlight: Harrisonburg-Rockingham Common Language Rollout

The Commonwealth Interoperability Coordinator's Office asked Mr. Jim Junkins of the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Emergency Communications Center to share his common language experience. This is what he had to say:

### What is the name of your organization and what disciplines are involved in the common language effort?

The organization is Harrisonburg-Rockingham Emergency Communications Center. There are 45 Law Enforcement, Fire, EMS and General Government agencies/Departments in Harrisonburg, Rockingham County and seven incorporated towns.

### What was your role in the rollout?

I introduced the concept, sought approval from the City and County emergency government executives, developed training for users, and created and distributed pertinent materials.

### What did your region do to prepare for the migration to Common Language?

1. Seek buy-in from critical public safety leaders. Those same leaders have been kept up to date on the progress of the common language protocol development for almost one year
2. Determine changes needed from current local protocols and codes
3. Determine roll-out methodology for awareness, training and migration
4. Evaluate and determine best case scenario for transition date/time

### How did your region facilitate the rollout process to all agencies and disciplines?

1. Disseminated SIEC one-page introduction to all agency/department heads one month prior to schedule cutover
2. Disseminated laminated placards customized for Law Enforcement, Fire/EMS and general government two weeks prior to cutover
3. Followed up with each agency/department head to ensure awareness training completed and placards ready to be installed in fleet and posted in offices
4. Announced cutover date one-week, three days, one day prior to actual cutover via email, intranet, text messaging and radio channels

### What went well about the way your region rolled it out? What could have been improved?

Heavy emphasis was placed on preparing the public safety agencies, and increasing awareness so the area could rely on leaders/training officers to perform the necessary train-

ing. This was done to disseminate the protocols to as many personnel as possible. Some agencies, however, did not/could not schedule formal training in the time needed to adequately inform all responders.

### Do you have any advice for the agencies that have yet to fully rollout Common Language?

1. Personally convey to each agency/Department leader the reasons behind the changes and why it is important for all to adopt. Encourage the leader to continually promote the protocol in a positive light.
2. Seek buy-in, acceptance and authority to implement the protocol from government executives. There may still be some resistance to actually utilizing the new protocols, but making the implementation a requirement from the "top-down" alleviates pockets of resistance among mid-level leaders who may be resistant to change.
3. There may be "joking" about the changes such as a reply I got for an email... "Copy, Roger, Okay, Acknowledged, Uh Uh Uh OVER . . . Anything but 10-4! Thanks." The good thing is people are aware of, understand and are embracing the protocols.

*Jim Junkins is the Director of the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Emergency Communications Center in Harrisonburg, Virginia. He previously served as the Emergency Communications Captain for Harrisonburg-Rockingham. He was tasked as the project manager for consolidating three communications centers into one, which now serves 31 public safety agencies and 120,000 citizens. His current roles include executive administration of the regional communications center and project manager of the Harrisonburg-Rockingham County regional radio system. He has also proudly served as an active volunteer firefighter for 26 years.*

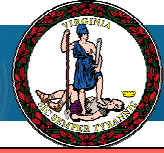
### Case Study—Common Language Migration: Hampton Police Department

Chief Jordan of the Hampton Police Division formally endorsed the Common Language Protocol on November 14, 2006. A Division of 289 sworn personnel, the Hampton Police Division currently operates with a CAD/OSSI Sunguard communications system.

The leadership of the Hampton Police Division felt the transition was important to ensure that they would have optimal interoperability capabilities with surrounding jurisdictions and so that the locality remains eligible for grant funding. Previously the Division migrated from 100 10-codes to the use of just 30 ten-codes and one signal. The integration of the Common Language Protocol will result in the use of just the four signals and one ten-code designated by the State Interoperability Executive Committee and endorsed by the Governor.



# INTEROPERABILITY IN VIRGINIA



## Recent Events

- The Commonwealth hosted a two-day All Hazards Stakeholders' Retreat on January 29-30 to determine the state's 2007 Homeland Security Grant Program submission.
- Chris Essid, CIC, gave the opening remarks at the Sprint/Nextel Grant Funding Opportunities Workshop in Roanoke on February 22.

## Upcoming Events Calendar

- **April 4-6**— Virginia Hospital and Healthcare Association (VHHA) Spring Conference in Williamsburg. For more information: <http://www.vhha.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=Page.viewPage&pageID=148>
- **April-May**—Regional Preparedness Advisory Committees Meetings – Norfolk 4/11, Northern VA 4/13, Culpeper 4/27, Charlottesville 5/2, Richmond 5/3, Southwest VA 5/23, Roanoke 5/24
- **April 20**—Virginia Emergency Management Conference in Williamsburg
- **April 26**—Virginia Chapter of APCO/NENA Spring Conference in Virginia Beach. For more information: [www.virginia-apco.org](http://www.virginia-apco.org)
- **June 15**—2007 Command, Control & Communications Vehicle Rally at Fairfax County Police Department's Driver Training Facility
- **June 20**—2007 Vehicle Rally, Mobile Command Communications Vehicle Rally at the Chesterfield County Fair Grounds
- **August 26-19** – 82<sup>nd</sup> Annual Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police (VACP) Conference in Williamsburg. For more information: [www.vachiefs.org/vacp/vacp\\_conferences.html](http://www.vachiefs.org/vacp/vacp_conferences.html)
- **September 9-11**—VA Sheriff's Association Annual Conference in Norfolk. For more information: [www.virginiasheriffs.org/vsa/index.htm](http://www.virginiasheriffs.org/vsa/index.htm)
- **September 27-28**—Virginia's Annual Interoperability Conference, Hotel Roanoke, Roanoke, VA. For more information: [www.interoperability.virginia.gov/2007Conference.html](http://www.interoperability.virginia.gov/2007Conference.html)
- **November 8-11**—Virginia EMS Symposium in Norfolk
- **November 11-13** – Virginia Association of Counties (VACo) 73<sup>rd</sup> Annual Conference at The Homestead. For more information: [www.vaco.org/CALENDAR/](http://www.vaco.org/CALENDAR/)

## Announcements!

- Planning is underway for the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Virginia Interoperable Communications Conference. This year the conference will take place on September 27-28 at the Hotel Roanoke. The agenda is under development, but please check the Interoperability in Virginia website for updates. [www.interoperability.virginia.gov/2007Conference.html](http://www.interoperability.virginia.gov/2007Conference.html)
- The Office of Commonwealth Preparedness (OCP) is organizing Regional Preparedness Advisory Committee (RPAC) meetings. The advisory groups meet regularly and focus on regional initiatives in training, equipment, communication, and strategy to ensure ready access to response teams in times of emergency; and to facilitate testing and training exercises for emergencies and mass casualty preparedness. Membership for each RPAC includes representatives from emergency management, fire, law enforcement, local government, the private sector and institutions of higher learning. There are 7 RPACS in total representing each of the Virginia's homeland security planning regions.
- The Commonwealth Interoperability Coordinator's Office would like to welcome Ms. Kerry Stuver to the team as Special Assistant. Ms. Stuver comes to us from the Executive Mansion. Welcome Kerry!